Effect of Indo-Pak relations on economy

3145. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether tension at Indo-Pak border has an adverse effect on our economy;

(b) if so, whether many of our welfare programmes have been greatly affected; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) No, Sir. The basic fundamentals of the economy have remained strong despite the hostile environment at the border.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Strengthening national security has been an overriding concern of the Government. The Union Budget (2002-03) has provided Rs. 65,000 crore as defence expenditure for the current financial year. The Budget has also committed to provide more resources to defence requirements, if the need arises. In addition, a 5 per cent across-the-board surcharge has been proposed on all categories of taxpayers (except individuals and Hindu Undivided Families having total income upto Rs. 60,000) for mobilising resources for augmenting national security.

Budgetary nightmare for cancer patients

3146. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in 'The Indian Express', dated the 15th March, 2002, under the heading "Have some sympathy, Mr. Sinha-Budgeting nightmares for cancer patients"; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto and what corrective steps have been taken or Government propose to take in this regard?